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AUTHOR Estes, Gary D.
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ABSTRACT

An Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I English/Writing project was continued at two Phoenix Union high schools, Carl Hayden and North High Schools, in 1974-75. Although the objectives and instructional method (individualized, diagnostic, prescriptive approach) were the same at the two schools, the entry level skills and abilities of the students, as well as the instructional materials and procedures, were different. The past year, 1974-1975, was the first complete year for the Title I English/Writing Programs in the Phoenix Union High School System (Hss). This report presents the results of the English/Writing program on students' writing proficiencies. Two samples of students' writing were collected at the beginning of the course and again at the end of the course. The samples included unstructured personal writing and structured order letter writing. Random samples for rating by an independent rater were chosen from those students with a complete set of pre and post writing samples. It is concluded that students who were enrolled in Title I and Phoenix Union High School System English/Writing classes improved their personal and order letter writing skills. Compared to students in Phoenix Union High School System classes, students in Title I classes made greater gains in personal writing skills and similar gains in order letter writing skills. (Author/JM)

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ADDENDUM TO ESEA TITLE I

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program Number 75-016

Phoenix Union High School System
2526 W. Osborn Road
Phoenix, Arizona, 85017

Prepared by

Gary D. Estes, Ph.D.
Federal Programs Evaluator

September, 1975

Title I Program	Research and Planning	Federal Programs
Norbert J. Konzal	Lloyd W. Colvin, Ph.D.	Donald D. Covey, Ed.D.
Director	Director	Director

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PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM

TITLE I ENGLISH/WRITING PROJECT

A Title I English/Writing project was continued at two Phoenix Union high schools, Carl Hayden and North High Schools, in 1974-75. Although the objectives and instructional method (individualized, diagnostic, prescriptive approach) were the same at the two schools, the entry level skills and abilities of the students, as well as the instructional materials and procedures, were different.

The past year, 1974-75, was the first complete year for the Title I English/Writing Programs in the Phoenix Union High School System. Results and evaluation of the English/Writing Program were presented in the 1974-75 Title I Program Evaluation for the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills-Language (ITBS-L) subtest scores. This report presents the results and evaluation of the English/Writing program on students' writing proficiencies.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Goal

To enable students in the Title I target group to improve their performance in the component skills of writing.

Student Selection

Students were identified as potential Title I students on the basis of their ITBS-L scores. Students with ITBS-L scores below a 6.9 grade level constituted the Title I target group. Teachers selected students for the Title I classes from the target group on the basis of the ITBS-L scores and students' writing samples. The writing samples were not scored but were evaluated for

the purpose of determining which students were the poorest writers. Students who were the lowest on the ITBS-L and were judged to be the most deficient in writing ability were assigned to Title I classes.

Student Description

Using the above selection procedures, a total of 222 ninth grade students (North = 143, Carl Hayden = 79) were directly served in Title I English/Writing classes. Students at North were enrolled in the Title I class for only one semester. Students at Carl Hayden were enrolled for two semesters.

Students in District supported classes were also indirect beneficiaries of Title I assistance because the size of these classes was reduced when some of the class members were assigned to a Title I class. A total of 576 ninth grade students (North = 353, Carl Hayden = 223) were classified as Indirect Title I students.

Staff Description

The following Title I staff was provided at Carl Hayden and North:

1.0 Teacher

1.0 Instructional Aide

1.0 Secretary, Service Aide, Community Aide

Summary of Cost

A total of $62,679 was expended in the Title I English/Writing program in 1974-75. The per pupil expenditures were $282.34 for students served directly.

Instructional Procedures

The teacher first examined samples of each student's writing to determine which writing skills the student needed to spend time on. The student's

curriculum was individualized in terms of mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.), usage (standard forms of language), and communicative qualities of writing (sentence structure, word choice, organization, etc.). The students's time was spent working on skills specific to his own needs, and his papers were evaluated against the set of objectives he was working toward.

Writing skills were largely taught during the process of writing rather than in whole-class lecture/dicussion before writing or in comments after the writing was finished. Units were introduced by the teacher who discussed the writing unit objectives with students and gave the broad assignment. Students worked in peer groups of two to five. They interacted during the whole process of writing, helping each other in formulating and finding focus for topics, in developing the pieces of writing, and in acting as audiences for completed pieces of writing.

During the class period the teacher and the instructional aide circulated among the peer groups. Because the students were proceeding at different rates, time was spent discussing the objectives of the next project and answering questions. Since peer groups did part of the editing and the teacher usually saw a paper several times during its development, a final evaluation took place in a brief tutorial--an individual conference between teacher and student. This procedure offered the student a chance to defend a particular word choice or the way he chose to organize his ideas. It also offered the teacher a chance to personally express interest in the student's ideas and to offer more detailed suggestions for revision or elaboration than would be possible in written comments.

Evaluation Design

A 2 (Title I vs Indirect Title I) X 3 (Hayden all year, North first semester, and North second semester) X 2 (pretest vs posttest) design was used.

This design was used to answer the following questions:

1. Does the writing ability of students who receive instruction in English/Writing classes improve from the beginning to the end of the course?
2. Do students who received Direct Title I assistance gain more or less than students who received only Indirect Title I assistance?
3. Are there differences in writing abilities among the three groups of students (i.e., Hayden all year, North first semester, and North second semester)?

A 2 X 3 X 2 analysis of variance with repeated measures was used to analyze the data obtained from student writing samples. All analyses were completed at Arizona State University Computer Center with computer programs maintained in the statistical library.

Writing Sample Criteria

Three samples of students' writing were collected at the beginning of the course and again at the end of the course. The samples were:

1. Unstructured personal writing. Students were asked to write an essay of their personal reactions in response to tape recorded sounds, (e.g., children at play, dog pound, etc.).
2. Structured writing. Students were asked to write an order letter in response to advertisements for a T-shirt and a bracelet.
3. A blank form. Students were asked to complete a job application form.

It was decided by the English Supervisor and Evaluator that the application forms would not be used to evaluate students' progress. The job application was designed for use by adults and did not appear to be useful in measuring students' improvement in written communication.

The personal writing and order letter writing samples were evaluated by an independent rater according to the following criteria and points:

Personal Writing

Criteria	Points
Communicative Qualities	12
Usage	6
Vocabulary	6
Spelling	3
Capitalization	3
Punctuation	3
Sentence Structure	3
Total Points	36

Order Letter

Criteria	Points
Communicative Qualities	12
Date	1
Inside Address	2
Greeting	1
Name & Address of Sender	4
Zip Code of Sender	1
Closing	1
Margins & Spacing	2
Spelling	3
Capitalization	3
Punctuation	3
Sentence Structure	3
Total Points	36

The form in Appendix A was used by the rater to record the scores for each student's writing sample. The total scores for the personal writing samples and order letters were used as two measure of students' writing ability.

Sample

Random samples for rating were chosen from those students with a complete set of pre and post writing samples (i.e., a pre order letter, a pre personal writing sample, a post order letter, and a post personal writing sample).

The final sample consisted of the sample sizes listed below:

	North First Semester	North Second Semester	Carl Hayden
Title I	N = 14	N = 24	N = 23
Indirect	N = 25	N = 25	N = 22

It was hoped that a sample of 25 could be obtained for each cell. However, North first semester (N = 14) was below 25 due to the fact that many of the pretest personal writing samples did not have names. The other cells were less than 25 because it was discovered after all papers were rated that some of the data was not complete for students chosen (e.g., what was thought to be a matched set of pre and post writing samples was missing a pre personal writing sample). Although equal cell sizes were not obtained it was decided the above sample sizes were sufficient to answer the questions in this evaluation.

RESULTS

Personal Writing Samples

Means of students' pretest and posttest personal writing samples are presented in Table 1. There was a significant improvement in students' personal writing ability from the pretest to the posttest ($F = 138.04$; $df = 1,127$; $p < .001$). In other words, the mean gain from 21.9 to 25.7 in students' personal writing samples was highly significant.

TABLE 1

Means for Students' Pretest and Posttest Personal Writing Samples by School-Group and Title I vs Indirect Title I

	Title I		Indirect Title I		Total	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
North 1st Semester	26.6	31.4	27.6	29.6	27.1	30.5
North 2nd Semester	20.7	25.8	22.5	24.1	21.6	24.9
Carl Hayden	17.0	23.0	17.0	20.5	17.0	21.7
Total	21.5	26.7	22.4	24.7	21.9	25.7

Question 2 was also answered affirmatively for students' personal writing samples. Students who received Direct Title I assistance gained significantly more ($F = 20.69$; $\underline{df} = 1,127$; $p < .001$), from 21.5 to 26.7, than students who only received Indirect Title I assistance, from 22.4 to 24.7. The results are illustrated in Figure 1 where it is evident that Title I students started slightly below Indirect Title I students on the pretest but were slightly greater on the posttest. However, the differences in Title I and Indirect Title I students' pretest personal writing samples were not significant ($F = 1.51$; $df = 1,127$; $p > .20$).

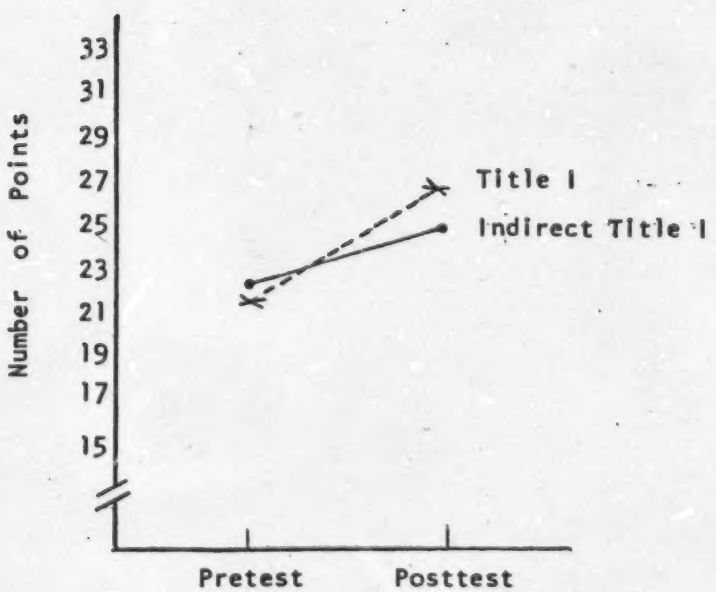

Fig. 1. Pretest and posttest personal writing sample means for Title I and Indirect Title I students.

There were significant differences ($F = 66.76$; $df = 2,127$; $p < .001$) in the three school-groups, i.e., North first semester students, North second semester students, and Carl Hayden students. It was anticipated that the highest would be North first semester and the lowest would be Carl Hayden because: (1) the better students at North took English/Writing first semester, and reading second semester, and (2) students at North were higher than students at Carl Hayden on the needs assessment. However, these three groups of students did not make differential gains ($F = 1.94$; $df = 2,127$; $p > .15$). This is illustrated in Figure 2. Note that the lines indicating the gain from pretest to posttest are approximately parallel. This indicates that changes from pretest to posttest were practically equivalent for the three groups of students.

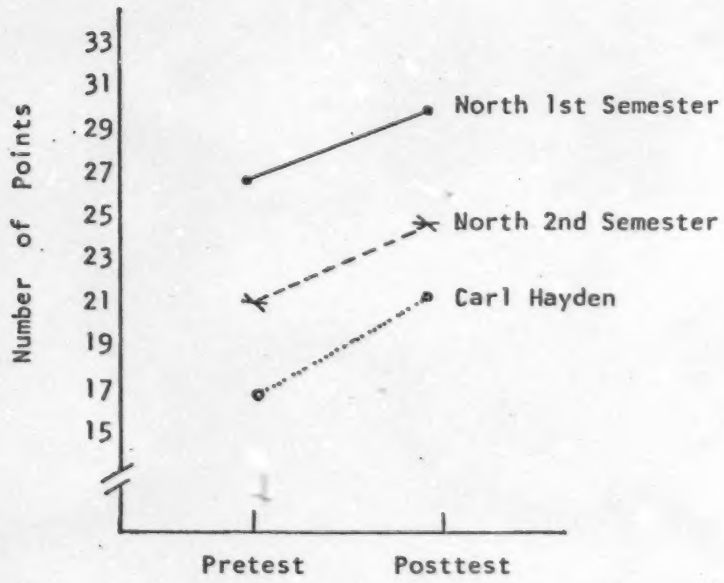

Fig. 2. Pretest and posttest personal writing sample means for three school-groups.

Order Letters

Means of students' pretest and posttest order letters are presented in Table 2. There was a significant improvement in students' order letters from the pretest to the posttest ($F = 466.65$; $df = 1,127$; $p < .001$). The mean gain of 11.2 from 18.6 on the pretest to 29.8 on the posttest for order letters is even more impressive than the gain observed in personal writing. It is likely that the technical writing skills needed to complete a structured order letter are easier to develop than the skills needed and used in personal writing.

TABLE 2

Means for Students' Pretest and Posttest Order Letters by School-Group and Title I vs Indirect Title I

	Title I		Indirect Title I		Total	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
North 1st Semester	26.0	33.1	21.4	32.2	23.7	32.7
North 2nd Semester	15.7	29.2	16.9	30.5	16.3	29.9
Carl Hayden	15.3	28.8	16.2	24.6	15.7	26.7
Total	18.2	30.4	19.0	29.1	18.6	29.8

Students receiving Direct Title I assistance did not gain significantly more in order letter writing skills than students only receiving Indirect Title I assistance ($F = .20$; $df = 1,127$; $p > .60$). Although the Title I students did not gain significantly more than Indirect Title I students, Figure 3 illustrates that the trend is the same as for personal writing. That is, Title I students began slightly below and ended slightly above Indirect Title I students. Title I students had a mean gain of 12.2 (18.2 to 30.4) while the Indirect Title I students had a mean gain of 10.1 (19.0 to 29.1). It is possible that the lack of significance is partly attributable to the qualities of the measurement instrument. As with the personal writing samples, there were no significant differences in Title I and Indirect Title I students' pretest order letters ($F = .59$; $df = 1,127$; $p > .55$).

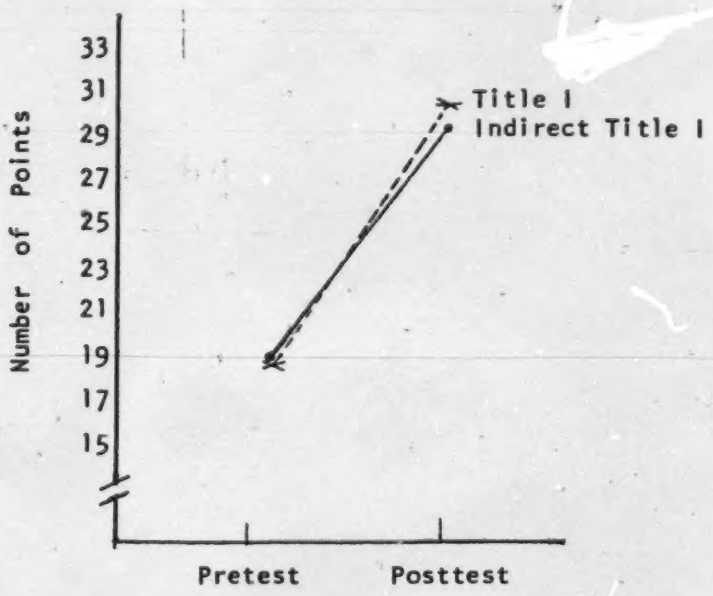

Fig. 3. Pretest and posttest order letter means for Title I and Indirect Title I students.

Order letter differences among North first semester students, North second semester students, and Carl Hayden students were significant ($F = 38.02$; $df = 2,127$; $p < .001$). Figure 4 illustrates that North first semester students were highest and Carl Hayden students lowest. Gains in order letter writing skills were significantly different for the three schools ($F = 6.78$; $df = 2,127$; $p < .001$). The significant difference in gains appears to be that North second semester students (gain of 13.6 from 16.3 to 29.9) gained more than either North first semester students (gain of 9.0 from 23.7 to 32.7) or Carl Hayden students (gain of 11.0 from 15.7 to 26.7). It might be noted that Carl Hayden students were in a year-long program and North students were in a one-semester program.

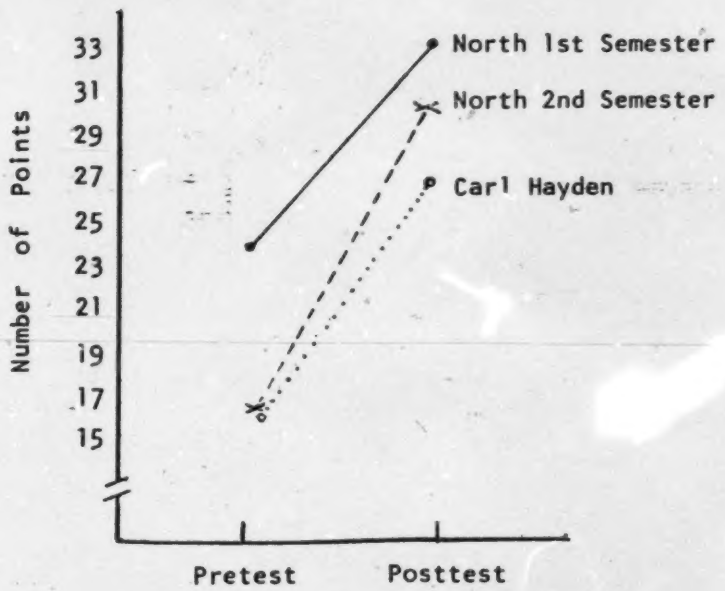

Fig. 4. Pretest and posttest order letter means for three school-groups.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Students who were enrolled in Title I and Phoenix Union High School System English/Writing classes improved their personal and order letter writing skills. Compared to students in Phoenix Union High School System classes students in Title I classes made greater gains in personal writing skills and similar gains in order letter writing skills. There were differences in the three groups of students. Any differences in gains for the three groups of students are more likely attributable to initial differences as opposed to differences in length of time in English/Writing classes.

Although teachers selected students for Title I classes partly on the basis of pretest writing samples, there were no significant differences in the Title I and Indirect Title I students on the writing pretests in these analyses. It might be that this lack of difference is due to variable(s) related to the characteristics of students who had complete sets of writing samples, i.e., only certain "kinds" of students might have complete data. Another factor might be that Iowa Tests of Basic Skills-Language and writing proficiency are unrelated.

The methods used for assessing students' proficiencies in writing are useful in detecting student changes over time and differences in groups. These methods are probably best described as a combination of criterion-referenced and applied performance tests. Further work is needed to revise and improve the utility of these procedures.

The support provided through Title I funds in the area of English/Writing appears to assist students with their writing abilities. Particularly

in personal writing samples, it appears the fiscal support, specialized materials, and individualized instruction are making a difference in students' progress. While these data do not provide a conclusive answer, they certainly provide encouragement for further development and use of the Title I English/Writing Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the data reported in the previous pages the following recommendations are made:

1. Continue the development and use of the materials and procedures in the Title I English/Writing program.
2. Further revise and improve the criteria for assessing writing proficiency so that a sensitive and reliable assessment of students' skills is possible.
3. Continue to work toward a completely individualized curriculum.
4. Consider implementing and carrying out an evaluation design which will:
    a. provide a clearer assessment of the impact of Title I funding, and
    b. provide data to ascertain the relationship between scores on a standardized test (ITBS-L) and writing proficiency.

Appendix A

CODE _____ TITLE I WRITING SAMPLE EVALUATION

PRE		POST
	PERSONAL WRITING	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Communicative Qualities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
1 2 3 4 5 6 ☐	Usage	1 2 3 4 5 6 ☐
1 2 3 4 5 6	Vocabulary	1 2 3 4 5 6
	Mechanics	
1 2 3	Spelling	1 2 3
1 2 3	Capitalization	1 2 3
1 2 3	Punctuation	1 2 3
1 2 3 ☐	Sentence Structure	1 2 3 ☐
☐	[Total]	☐
☐	Estimated Word Count	☐
	ORDER LETTER	
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Communicative Qualities	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
	Form	
0 1	Date	0 1
0 1 2	Inside Address	0 1 2
0 1	Greeting	0 1
0 1 2 3 4	Name and Address of Sender	0 1 2 3 4
0 1	Zip Code of Sender	0 1
0 1	Closing	0 1
0 1 2 ☐	Margins and Spacing	0 1 2 ☐
	Mechanics	
0 1 2 3	Spelling	0 1 2 3
0 1 2 3	Capitalization	0 1 2 3
0 1 2 3	Punctuation	0 1 2 3
0 1 2 3 ☐	Sentence Structure	0 1 2 3 ☐
☐	[Total]	☐

15